CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. A.J. Roycroft has written to this Journal on a somewhat delicate subject. The item under discussion was Walter Korn's *Apples to Pears on Knowledge Synthesis* entry in the ICCA Journal Correspondence (Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 107), to which A.J. Roycroft has taken violent objection, both as to its being included and as to its conclusions.

As to the former point the Editors wish to point out that theirs and only theirs is the decision to include, exclude or refer to the author or other referees for improvement any and all contributions submitted to them. Hence, objections to the *inclusion* of an article, note or similar cannot be entertained.

As to the merits of what Korn has published, we think A.J. Roycroft's response deserves publication in full. It hinges on the fairness of pitting a human player against a necessarily inhuman database and has clearly been framed in terms of one person's experiences when preparing play against a database felt to be inimical. As such it deserves publication; its deserts are further enhanced by the statures of the parties involved: D. Michie and A.J. Roycroft.

For this reason and quite exceptionally the Editors take the opportunity to publish Roycroft's letter *in full*, noting that while Korn's letter may have triggered the correspondence, the text is published for its intrinsic interest rather than for its controversial topicality.

PERSONAL FACTS ABOUT THE BB vs. N EXPERIMENT -- and after

John Roycroft

1. In December 1983 Donald Michie approached IBM(UK) to ask for my release to assist in an as yet unidentified project to be funded, it was hoped, by an Industrial Fellowship of the Royal Society and Science and Engineering Research Council. The industrial Fellowship was in due course awarded and IBM released me under its secondment scheme. The dates of the secondment were April 25, 1984 to October 24, 1985.
2. The BB vs. N project was identified in September 1984. Ken Thompson secured the generous agreement of Bell Laboratories in New Jersey to release the data base to the Turing Institute in Glasgow. From October to January 1985, say effectively two and a half months, I studied the endgame on my own. At no time did I have access to the data base. All my thought processes and method of proceeding were logged in 300 pages of hand-written 'protocol' that await an interested publisher.
3. Early in January 1985 I advised Donald Michie that I was ready for the first test. Position No. 1 was played on March 29, 1985 and Position No. 10 on April 30, 1985.
4. Thereafter I had immediate access to the data base. However, a chess-friendly interface designed to my specifications was not finally ready until 10 days before I faced Position No. 1 (in the second series of tests) on August 26, 1985. The last in this series was played on September 19, 1985. Therefore the second period of study was from May 1, 1985 to August 25, 1985. As I was not denied summer holiday the second study period lasted, say, a good three months.
5. The total period spent studying the two-bishops-against-knight endgame was therefore five and a half months, three of which included unrestricted, if elementary, access to the data base. Only the last ten days of the latter period were what I could call totally satisfactory, in that computer output was in conventional terse chess format, while interaction included many easily selected options. Chess positions were never displayed as diagrams. Dr. Alen Shapiro, who had many other commitments, programmed this user interface magnificently.
6. The annual Britsh Chess Championships took place in Edinburgh in August 1985. IGM Raymond Keene, present but not playing in the event, declined an invitation to travel to Glasgow to play against the data base, but FIDE Master Graham Lee, who is today General Secretary to the British Chess Federation, accepted. Subsequent experiences in inviting GMs to comment on other virgin data-base output have had disappointing results.
7. The record of the world's experts, including IGMs, who have discussed this ending in print since Horwitz and Kling in the year 1851, is a record of periphrastic repetition of the original verdict,